

DEER HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Deer Herd Unit #30
(Pine Valley)
April 2006

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Iron and Washington counties - Boundary begins at I-15 and the Utah-Arizona state line; north on I-15 to SR-56; west on SR-56 to the Lund Highway; northwest along the Lund Highway to the Union Pacific railroad tracks at Lund; southwest on the Union Pacific railroad tracks to the Utah-Nevada state line; south on this state line to the Utah-Arizona state line; west on this state line to I-15.

LAND OWNERSHIP**RANGE AREA AND APPROXIMATE OWNERSHIP**

	Year-long range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
Ownership	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	15557	23%	212454	67%	182357	38%
Bureau of Land Management	47018	70%	36143	11%	210905	44%
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	830	1%	1446	<1%	22429	5%
Native American Trust Lands	0	0%	5859	2%	141	<1%
Private	3422	5%	13944	4%	64236	13%
Department of Defense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
USFWS Refuge	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
National Parks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Utah State Parks	0	0%	0	0%	309	<1%
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Wilderness (USFS & BLM)	0	0%	47881	15%	2350	<1%
TOTAL	66827	99%	317727	100%	482727	100%

TOTAL FROM 2001 PLAN	1601	100%	300053	100%	466484	100%
CHANGE (+/-)	+ 65226		+ 17674		+ 16243	

UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS

Overall deer numbers are significantly below both long term and recent (1980's) levels. The unit will be managed to permit deer numbers to increase somewhat, while precluding overuse of ranges and reducing agricultural damage. The unit will be evaluated for different hunt strategies.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

population of 12,800 deer on the entire WMU. This is a reduction of 20% from the previous plan period and is justified as based on the discussion in Permanent Range Trend Summaries at the end of this document. If range trend indicators rebound to the Fair category in the future, the population objective will be amended upward to the long term value of 16,000 deer. This change will be contingent on range quality and quantity increasing to levels capable of sustaining populations at long-term objective levels.

- < Herd Composition – Maintain a region wide three-year average post-season buck:doe ratio ranging from 15 to 20 bucks per 100 does.

	Objective from past plan (2001)	Long-term Objective	2006-2011 Objective	Change
Pine Valley	16,000	16,000	12,800	- 3,200

POPULATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Monitoring

- < Population Size - Herd composition and population size will be monitored through post season and spring classification, hunter check stations, harvest surveys and computer modeling.
- < Buck Age Structure - The age class structure of the buck population will be monitored through the use of checking stations, postseason classification, uniform harvest surveys and field bag checks.
- < Harvest - The primary means of monitoring harvest will be through the statewide uniform harvest survey. The strategy for the Pine Valley unit will be general buck hunting. Buck harvest strategies will be developed through the RAC and Wildlife Board process to achieve management objectives for buck:doe ratios. Antlerless harvest will be directed toward agricultural problems, range problems, and population regulation.

Limiting Factors (May prevent achieving management objectives)

- < Crop Depredation - Agricultural damage will be addressed through herding, fencing, landowner permits, mitigation permits, depredation hunts, Division removal and damage payments.
- < Habitat - Winter range in localized areas may be a limiting factor. Overall “poor” range condition rating may be indicative of a decline in carrying capacity (see discussions below).
- < Predator Management - This unit historically had high densities of mountain lions. Lion harvest will be evaluated and adjusted relative to the widely fluctuating deer populations characteristic of this unit. Coyote control will be addressed under statewide predator management direction.
- < Interspecific competition - No limitation generated by elk/deer interactions has been documented.
- < Highway Mortality - Highway mortality along I-15, SR-56, SR-18 is significant.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- < Maintain and/or enhance forage production through direct range improvements throughout the unit on winter and summer range to achieve population management objectives.
- < Maintain critical fawning habitats in good condition.
- < Manage public lands adjacent to areas with heavy agricultural depredation to promote deer use during late summer.

- < Maintain and protect critical winter range from future losses. Acquire critical winter range when the opportunity arises.

Condition of deer winter range on Unit 30, as indicated by DWR range trend surveys.

Year	Mean DCI score for Unit	Classification	Unit-specific DCI score range: Poor	Unit-specific DCI score range: Fair	Unit-specific DCI score range: Good
1998	45	Fair	28 - 42	43 - 58	59 - 76
2003	34	Poor			

HABITAT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- < Habitat suitability will be assessed through annual "range rides", trend studies and casual observation. Unsuitable habitat condition will be addressed through meetings and negotiations with landowners and land management agencies.
- < Implement ecosystem management practices, including controlled burns and fuel wood harvest, in the Ox Valley - Lost Peak area, and the east slope of the Pine Valley Mountain.
- < Protect riparian areas to furnish cover, water and succulent forage adjacent to areas with historic agricultural damage.
- < Provide guzzlers or other water sources where needed on critical summer fawning areas.

PERMANENT RANGE TREND SUMMARIES**Unit 30, Pine Valley**

A total of 22 vegetation transects were read in 2003. Average trend of soil conditions on winter ranges was slightly below stable. Average browse condition on winter ranges was slightly downward, despite the currently low deer populations. Conditions Southwest of Newcastle (30-29), Grapevine Spring (30-42) and Bullion Canyon (30-54) were particularly bad, and considerable sagebrush die-off had occurred there. Herbaceous trends on winter ranges were also downward and have shown a steady decline in trend since 1992.

Pinyon/juniper thinning projects in conjunction with fuels reduction have been completed on Tobin Bench, Southwest of Newcastle, Woolsey Reseed, and Quitchapa Canyon. In addition, a pinyon/juniper thinning was completed on the North Hills north of Enterprise on SITLA land. All projects completed should contribute to better conditions for wintering deer.

Summer range trend conditions are better, except for herbaceous understory condition, which continued to decline.

Wildfires have had a significant impact on habitats in the southern and western portions of this unit in recent years. Over 250,000 acres have burned in a variety of vegetative types in Washington County since 2003. Where cheatgrass is prevalent, some locations have burned more than once during that time period. In addition, severe flooding in January 2005 drastically altered riparian communities along Moody Wash, Mogatsu Creek, Beaver Dam Wash, Santa Clara River, Virgin River, and neighboring drainages. Results of these events will impact deer use of these areas for several years.

Duration of Plan

This unit management plan was approved by the Wildlife Board on _____ and will be in effect for five years from that date, or until amended.